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ABSTRACT

Papers from a forum sponsored by the Association for Institutional Research address the role problems of institutional researchers and the special position of institutional research in institutions of higher education and the issues that lead to conflict between institutional research, data gathering activities, and the faculty. In "Dilemmas in Institutional Research," Martin Trow explores the function and characteristics of the data gathered by institutional researchers, how it is used and how it affects relationships between and among the various component bodies in higher education. In "The Faculty and Institutional Research--Perspectives from a Private College," Jack E. Possanna provides insights into the attitudes toward institutional research at a small private college. In "Faculty Perceptions of the Institutional Research Function: What's a Nice Person Like You Doing in a Place Like This?," Ann Marie Hasse and Warren Ohlke report on a study that gives descriptive information on faculty perceptions of institutional research. In "Academicians and Analysts: Allies or Antagonists?," Joe L. Saupe identifies four potential sources of conflict between academicians and analysts and provides 13 suggestions on how to reduce the antagonism between faculty members and institutional researchers. (SW)

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Special Problems of Institutional Researchers

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Center for Educational Management Studies

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NE 011 508

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SPECIAL PROBLEMS OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCHERS

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January, 1978

The Center for Educational Management Studies (CEMS), founded in 1975, is now located at the University of Hawaii. The mission of CEMS is to facilitate the development and implementation of innovative management techniques at institutions of higher education. CEMS is supported in part by a grant from the Exxon Education Foundation. The CEMS monograph series is a periodic publication of research reports and articles of interest to the higher education community.

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FOREWORD

The papers comprising Special Problems of Institutional Researchers are based on the authors' presentations at the 16th Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research on May 5, 1976 in Los Angeles. Under the general heading, "Institutional Research--A Jackal in the Academic Jungle?" each of the speakers addressed the role problems of institutional researchers and the special position of institutional research in institutions of higher education; the issues which lead to conflict between institutional research, data gathering activities and the faculty are explored in depth. We are proud to present this fine collection of essays as CEMS 3.

In "Dilemmas in Institutional Research," Martin Trow explores the function and characteristics of the data gathered by institutional researchers, how it is used, and how it effects relationships between and among the various component bodies in higher education--faculty, institutional researchers, administrators and state legislators. Both broad categories and "deep knowledge" in data gathering have merits for policy making but there are disadvantages to each as well. The broad categories of description and analysis can be a distortion but are often necessary to administer effectively; the more specific data may better describe the uniqueness of departments and programs but makes those same departments more vulnerable to intervention from outside agencies.

Jack Rossmann provides insights into the attitudes toward institutional research at a small private college. He divides faculty opinion on IR into three categories--the "pros," "cons" and "uncertains." He feels that attention should be given to the variables which can push those in the last group into one of the other two and the variables which cause faculty to give or withhold their support of institutional research. Administrative leadership, faculty autonomy, collective bargaining, faculty collaboration, researcher competence and off-campus use of data are primary factors which he found influenced the attitudes of faculty toward IR.

In "Faculty Perceptions of the Institutional Research Function: What's a Nice Person Like You Doing in a Place Like This?" Ann Marie Haase and Warren Gulko report on a study which gives descriptive be[illegible] to the data on faculty perceptions of IR. They examine the "no man's land" that IR occupies between administration and faculty. And they make suggestions on how institutional researchers may bridge this gap.

Joe Saupe identifies four potential sources of conflict between academicians and analysts: their different views of the function of a college or university, of efficiency and effectiveness, their unfamiliarity with each other and each other's work, and the role of institutional researchers as staff to administrators. He gives us ten perceptive and useful suggestions on how to reduce the antagonism between faculty members and institutional researchers and reminds us that ultimately the goal of both is the same--the excellence of the college and its programs.

DILEMMAS IN INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

by Martin Trow

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Institutional research (IR) in American colleges and universities functions at the interface of the public and private lives of higher education.[1] I mean by the public life of higher education almost everything one thinks of as policy, administration, finance and governance. Most public policy addresses itself to the more formal life of our organizations--their legal, political and economic life. The private life of higher education is what we mean by teaching and learning: it is what goes on in classrooms, laboratories, libraries and academic offices between and among students and teachers.

Institutional research (IR) very often studies the private life of colleges and universities in the service of administration and finance, governance and management; it is one way the managers of the public life of our institutions inform themselves of developments in the areas of teaching and learning. Institutional research people sometimes carry out studies for academic committees or departments, but ordinarily their client is a senior administrator in their own institution. And this fact--that IR people do research on academic activities for administrative purposes--is the source of a good deal of role strain among them. (The same problem is encountered incidentally, among academic deans, who also exist at the interface of the faculty and the administration.)

One way for IR people to reduce the strains arising out of the peculiar nature of their work is to emphasize their membership in administration--that is, to reduce their contact with faculty members and try to gather the data they need through other agencies, through the departments, the registrar, and the like. My colleagues on this panel all urge against this. Joe Saupe's First Commandment is "do something for the faculty,"[2] and that means, at a minimum, to talk to them and to interact with them. I agree with Professor Saupe warmly, with the single qualification that this advice, if taken, is likely to increase the role strain for institutional researchers. I believe it will make their work better, but it will make their lives harder.

I mention this only to suggest that there are some inherent difficulties in institutional research in higher education that constitute not problems to be solved, but dilemmas to be lived with and coped with--"managed" rather than "solved." One of these dilemmas has to do with a fundamental issue in research: that is, the nature and breadth of the categories that we use for the description and analysis of a problem.

Institutional research, like all research, involves the collection of data within descriptive categories. Colleges and universities are highly diverse and complex collections of activities and relationships organized for convenience into categories called departments and courses, and carried on by people called faculty members and students. These activities take place in spaces called classrooms, laboratories

and offices. We all know that the actual forms of academic life--the activities, relationships, the kinds of people, and the functions of space--that are combined under a given category are not alike, but we choose to treat them as if they were alike for descriptive convenience, and ultimately for administrative or policy purposes. Every category is thus a fiction; the question is whether it is a useful or a harmful fiction in any given case.

I believe this is of crucial importance to IR. The question put slightly differently is: what descriptive categories do the least violence to the realities we are trying to describe? How broad or fine should our categories be in order to provide information that will lead to wise decisions rather than poor ones?

One illustration: a university student body is growing and changing. A budget officer is reviewing the library budget and asks the IR office: "What are the implications of these changes in student enrollment for future student demand on library resources? Can the IR office work up some projections in a couple of weeks?" Well, we can attend to the crudest measure first and develop projections of overall student enrollment, basing projected demand for library resources on growth in the total number of students. Or we may be a bit more sophisticated, knowing that library use varies sharply among lower division students, upper division students, masters candidates and doctoral candidates. So we might disaggregate our student population projections to develop estimates of future demand on the library on this more differentiated basis.

But then we may go a step further, reminding ourselves that library demand also varies sharply among majors and graduate students in different academic subjects. We know that library use is higher among historians than among chemists, so we might look more closely at anticipated changes in enrollment mix by field and subject. (It is probable that our initial two-week assignment is now long past and we have either submitted a "quick and dirty report" or are engaged in a more serious long-term study of the effect of student size and mix on library demand; or perhaps we're doing both.)

In any event, this example illustrates how we can modify our descriptive and analytical categories toward greater refinement and further disaggregation. Let's go one or two steps further. Assuming we can extend our study, we may, on closer inspection, learn that the growth in the number of history majors is due almost completely to the development of a special major in community or urban history, and that the work of these majors is much less heavily based on books than on the gathering of primary records and interviews in the local community. At the same time, the major in physics has added a significant component in the history of science, a move bound to increase library use among the majors in that subject.

And here, suddenly, we find ourselves seeking "deep knowledge" about the academic programs themselves. I mean by "deep knowledge" that close, intimate knowledge about the private life of higher education--what actually goes on within the classrooms, libraries, offices and labs--that underlies all our categories. This is the kind of knowledge that ordinarily only the faculty members have, and they only about their own discipline or sub-disciplines. Note also that we are no longer really counting bodies, but looking at functions and activities. And once we begin to do this, we start adding a quite different kind of "deep knowledge"--for example, we begin to consider the development of alternatives to the use of books, such as a new video-tape lab for the sciences, or the use (and sale) of journal articles on microfiche in the humanities.

There is a general sense that the internal diversity of higher education requires that institutional analysis move toward ever more refined, differentiated, disaggregated categories of description. As it does so, it finds itself forced to come closer to "deep knowledge" about academic programs and the processes of teaching and learning.

Such "deep knowledge" explodes categories and atomizes them: the more one knows about an academic activity or function, the less satisfactory any broad academic categories seem.

The breadth of our descriptive categories and the depth of our "deep knowledge" about the academic programs which we are analyzing is a central issue in dealing with the wariness of faculty members toward institutional research. In her stimulating paper, Ann Marie Bernazza Haase notes that faculty members believe that "data should be collected in context; i.e., an appropriate unit of measurement should be defined specifically for the individual department being considered so the resulting data would reflect academic reality."[3]

Exactly so. The faculty is concerned that broader categories might do violence to the unique work being carried on within a specific department, and it pushes the institutional researcher to take the time and trouble to gain the "deep knowledge" of its private life if it must carry out these studies at all.

There is among many faculty members a strong ambivalence in this regard: on one hand, perhaps, the less the administration knows the better; on the other hand, partial or inaccurate information may do the department harm, so it would really be safer for all concerned if the administration was furnished with accurate information. So the faculty generally wants the IR people to pursue this "deep knowledge" of its programs, and to recognize the uniqueness of each program and each department. And many IR people also want to improve the quality and sophistication of their analysis as well as the decisions affected by it. Like other policy analysts, institutional researchers pursue sophistication and wisdom through greater disaggregation and finer analysis.

But this isn't always possible. Indeed, it is often not possible. Why not? There are several answers to that question. Administrators demand analyses in broad categories. For simple management purposes they need to plan, coordinate and report on broad insitutional activities involving people, space, time and equipment; they want to know where costs are rising, they want to maintain their control over the budget (they may not even want to know why costs are rising, just where); and they increasingly need data to justify activities to outsiders--to state officials or coordinating councils. These functions of data are more easily accomplished if the categories of analysis are broad and simple. It is very easy for an administrative body to drown in detail, and to find itself quite unable to develop workable and justifiable administrative policies and practices unless they have broad descriptive and analytical categories to work with. The finer the categories, the more it appears as if they are making ad hoc and arbitrary decisions and, even apart from the administrative difficulties, the harder it is to defend their decisions.

But quite apart from those administrative reasons, there is the other absolutely overriding limitation on IR's grasp of "deep knowledge"--there is simply too much for any person or group to be really knowledgeable about in the academic and intellectual developments of 40, 50 or 60 schools and departments. If nothing else, the enormous density and complexity of these activities would set a sharp limit on the refinement of our analyses of college and university life.

So the dilemma might be put as follows: broad categories of description and analysis are very often a serious distortion of the teaching and learning processes in specific departments, disciplines and sub-disciplines, and wholly inadequate for wise policy regarding the private life of higher education. But those broad categories are also very often necessary for the administration of large enterprises and for the justification of those enterprises to outsiders; moreover, broad categories are an inevitable outcome of the limits of anyone's detailed knowledge. That, I believe, is the central dilemma of institutional research in higher education.

The dilemma is even more painful when the data are being gathered for use by authorities outside the college or university. The "better" (the more complete, the more detailed, the more accurate) the data reported to state agencies, the more those agencies are able to intervene directly in the private life of public colleges and universities. Put in our terms, the finer the categories of description and analysis used by state agencies, the greater their encroachment on the autonomy of institutions of higher education. Thus in any given situation the coarseness of the categories in which data is gathered and used by public authorities comes to be an operational measure of the autonomy

of institutions under their authority. The institutional dilemma--coarse categories which distort or fine ones which intrude--is paralleled by the individual academic's dilemma which takes the form of simultaneous wishes that his department/school/college not be "evaluated," subject to cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness analysis, but if it is, that it should be done with due regard to its unique qualities and characteristics.

But having defined the dilemma, is there anything we can do about it? If we can't exactly solve it, how can we manage it? When do categories of description and analysis do violence to the realities of the private life of higher education great enough to outweigh their gains?

Views on these questions differ depending on one's position in the institution. And this fact lies at the heart of the conflict between faculty and administration on what problems institutional research should address. But regardless of how one feels about this question, most analysts would also agree that there are some problems or questions that are not studied fruitfully through broad institutional research by an IR unit. What problems are they? Would discussion on this question within the IR community shed light on it? Whatever they are--and surely some such problems exist--they help define, indeed they constitute, the limits of institutional research in higher education. These limits will surely vary by institution--as for example, between large and small institutions. But there may be other ways in which we can think about the limits of institutional research and the variability of those limits under different circumstances.

And finally, how would a professional discussion and recognition of the limits of institutional research affect its relations with faculty members? Would it allay that profound anxiety among academics that Dr. Haase describes so vividly in her paper? Would it encourage the kind of faculty support that Dr. Rossmann believes is necessary to an IR operation which has any value to learning and research?[4]

A consideration of the adequacy of our categories of description and analysis to the detailed private life of colleges and universities then brings us very soon to a consideration of the limits of institutional research. Institutional research (and indeed all of policy analysis) can do better and more effectively what it is able to do when it begins to learn what it cannot and should not do.

NOTES

[1]For an elaboration of this distinct on see my "Public and Private Lives of Higher Education," Daedalus, Winter 1975, Volume II, pp. 113-127.

[2]Saupe, Joe L., "Academicians and Analysts: Allies or Antagonists?," p. 27.

[3]Haase, Ann Marie Bernazza and Warren W. Gulko, "Faculty Perceptions of the Institutional Research Function: What's a Nice Person Like You Doing in a Place Like This?", p. 18.

[4]Rossmann, Jack E., "The Faculty and Institutional Research--Perspectives from a Private College".

THE FACULTY AND INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH--PERSEPECTIVES FROM A PRIVATE COLLEGE

By Jack E. Rossmann

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Describing and understanding faculty attitudes toward institutional research is analogous to the problem of the blind men and the elephant--it depends largely on which faculty member one listens to and at what time. I have been a faculty member at Macalester since 1964, and it is my impression that my faculty colleagues are rarely in unanimous agreement on anything. When confronted with important issues, the faculty, like Gaul, can typically be divided into three parts--the "pros," the "cons" and the "uncertains."

I regard the collection of institutional research data as important, and it is likely that three camps can be found on this issue as well. Among my faculty colleagues, some are enthusiastic endorsers of the importance and appropriateness of research activity; some see no value in it whatsoever and, in fact, see it as an utter waste of scarce institutional resources; and some are ambivalent on the subject.

An enthusiastic endorser, Colleague A, recently told me of a conversation he had with an "unalterably opposed" faculty member, Colleague B. Colleague B commented to Colleague A that conducting institutional research studies related to the teaching/learning process is analogous to research on human sexual activity conducted by Masters and Johnson; it attempts to quantify and examine objectively what should remain a mysterious, wondrous, subjective, beautiful process. "Yes," replied Colleague A, "but you should note that the focus of the Masters and Johnson research has been on inadequacy."

The focus of the remainder of my comments will be on trying to better understand the basis on which the middle or ambivalent group of faculty members reaches a decision about whether or not to support institutional research activities at a private, four-year-college campus.

I would suggest there are at least six variables involved: administrative leadership; faculty autonomy; collective bargaining; faculty collaboration; perceived competence of the data collector; and probable off-campus use of the data.

Administrative Leadership

During the ten or eleven years in which I was involved in institutional research activities at Macalester, I worked with four presidents and three academic vice-presidents. Faculty confidence in the leadership capabilities of those administrators varied tremendously and as the perceived competence of the chief administrators rose or fell, attitudes toward IR activities tended to follow a similar pattern. Regardless of the extent to which faculty members are involved in advisory or collaborative activities related to IR, the IR function will still be seen as a "tool of the administration," and the administration is usually viewed as a threat--the "them" component of an us/them dichotomy. If,

however, the administration is successful at those activities most faculty members regard as important, and if the administration views the institutional research operation positively, IR is likely to be tolerated by most of the middle group of faculty and encouraged by some. If, on the other hand, the administration is seen as inept, the research shop is likely to bask in the "glory" of this perceived ineffectiveness.

Faculty Autonomy

One of the most certain ways for an institutional researcher at a private four-year college to incur the wrath of his or her faculty colleagues is to undertake a faculty activities analysis. Few small-college faculty receive support for sponsored research during the academic year, and, beyond that, most simply regard it as "none of the administrations's business" how they divide their time among teaching, advising, scholarly activities, committee work, etc. While it seems ludicrous in an environment where the faculty is committed to "seeking truth," gathering data about their own activities or the processes of higher education is not a typical faculty activity. Thus, if institutional research activities are perceived as impinging on a faculty member's autonomy, faculty reaction is apt to be swift and negative.

Collective Bargaining

Few private four-year colleges have adopted the collective bargaining model as yet. While I have had no direct experience with an institution that engages in collective bargaining, it is my understanding that the collective bargaining process has a major impact on the way in which faculty members perceive institutional research. It becomes impossible for the institutional researcher to keep a foot planted firmly in both the faculty and the administration camps. He or she must move one way or the other--and the direction is typically toward providing data for the administration. When this happens, the middle group of faculty is likely to become less than enthusiastic in its support of the IR data-collection efforts.

Faculty Collaboration

When the collective bargaining model is not operative, it becomes much easier to involve faculty in collaborative relationships with institutional research. Whether as members of an advisory committee or as actual research collaborators, given the opportunity most middle-group faculty will become helpful participants in the institutional

research process. Most of the successful research projects in which I have participated have involved faculty members in some meaningful fashion and the projects have benefited greatly from that involvement. It has been my experience that familiarity breeds respect.

Researcher Competence

If familiarity is to lead to respect, however, the institutional researcher must share the scholarly ideals of the faculty members--a commitment to high-quality intellectual inquiry and empirical rigor. Faculty members must see the same quality in the written or verbal reports of the institutional researcher as they expect in the published material of their faculty colleagues. While I would not suggest that all institutional research reports should be designed so that they could be considered for publication in refereed journals, an occasional publication is likely to increase faculty respect for institutional research.

Off-Campus Use

Collection of data for off-campus agencies has probably not become a crucial issue among the faculty at most small, private colleges up to the present time, but its importance is likely to increase as statewide coordinating boards become more involved with the fiscal affairs of independent colleges. If the data collected are perceived by the faculty as being of primary use to off-campus agencies with little positive payoff for the college, and especially for the faculty, not many faculty members will be eager participants in the collection of institutional research data.

Concluding Comments

What I have suggested in this brief paper is that at a small four-year college, faculty members view few issues with unanimity, and the collection of institutional research data is no exception. Some like it, some hate it, and some don't know what to think of it. Among this "don't know" group, I have proposed some variables which influence faculty attitudes: administrative leadership, threat to faculty autonomy, collective bargaining, faculty collaboration, perceived competence of the data collector, and use to be made of the data by off-campus agencies.

While many of these variables cannot be controlled by the institutional researcher, manipulation of some of the variables can increase the support and cooperation of the faculty. Faculty support does not assure success, but lack of faculty support will probably result in an institutional

research operation that contributes little to the teaching/ learning process at the college. And I think we need to remind ourselves periodically that it is that sometimes quantifiable, but frequently mysterious and beautiful process of learning which is the reason our institutions continue to exist.

FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF THE INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH FUNCTION: WHAT'S A NICE PERSON LIKE YOU DOING IN A PLACE LIKE THIS?

by Ann Marie Bernazza Haase and Warren W. Gulko

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During the last five years, institutional research (IR) has found itself in a new political context that can be attributed to a number of factors. One of the more recent controversies in institutional research is over its acceptance--or rejection--by faculty in institutions of higher learning. Addressing the issue in 1970, Trow attested to the fact that faculties mistrust data and evaluation because they think the process smacks of vocationalism which challenges the value of the rational man who is able to interpret experience through his own sensibilities. In 1975, Trow discussed the resistance of faculty to the thrust of institutional research in addressing problems inherent in the private lives of the university. He stated that a central issue of mass higher education is the faculty's adherence to the "spontaneous adaptation of resources...to the immediate special circumstances in which learning and teaching are going on" and the consternation this spontaneity causes the academic planner and the rational manager.

Viewing the problem from the perspective of an institutional researcher, Service (1975) suggested that the conflict over institutional data collection and use was symptomatic of larger organizational questions such as trust between individuals and organizations, resistance to change and innovation, and the decline and stabilization of resources. In line with this argument, Adams, Kellogg and Schroeder (1976), reporting on an extensive survey of decision-making in colleges, hypothesized that faculty have little influence upon decision-making despite their full and active participation.

Most of these investigations appear to depend on the experiences, discussions, and judgments of the investigators. The study reported here is intended to ascertain faculty perceptions of the institutional research function on their respective campuses in order to provide descriptive data giving depth and breadth to the current literature.

Procedure

The Sample

Four institutions of higher education were included in the study: one state university and three private liberal arts colleges. At each institution the director of institutional research or a responsible administrator was contacted. The purposes and methodology of the study were described to this individual, and the names of interested faculty were obtained. At each institution, the list of names included both friendly and hostile faculty; however, in no instance was the attitude of the faculty member identified by the institutional researcher or academic dean.

Twenty-six faculty and academic administrators at the four institutions were contacted. The purpose of the study was explained to them, a general overview of the questions was presented, and an interview schedule was arranged. Only

one faculty member who originally agreed to participate subsequently withdrew from the study. Of the 25 interviewed, 11 were from the state university and 14 were from the three private colleges. The sample of faculty included five academic deans: three from the state university and two from the private colleges. At each institution, faculty from the humanities, social sciences, physical sciences, biological sciences, and professional areas were represented.

The Interview Instrument

An open-ended interview schedule was constructed to aid in data collection. It was reviewed by three of the four persons responsible for institutional research and was edited according to their comments. The instrument was then pre-tested on three faculty members not included in the study. The final interview schedule contained 24 detailed questions covering four major areas: (1) information: its uses and effects, (2) decision-making, (3) attitudes and attitude change, and (4) directions for institutional research.

Responses from the faculty and deans at the state university and the private liberal arts colleges were tabulated separately and analyzed for similarity and contrast. In the following discussion, both the private college and the public university responses are presented as a totality except where there is disagreement between the groups.

Findings

The authors are aware that both the type and size of the sample limits generalization of the findings. It is also recognized that systematic bias and antecedent variables are present due to the individual nature of each institution and the particular political, economic, and social dynamics of each college and university. The findings are reported in narrative form, since tabular arrays and statistical analyses may be misleading. However, the study produced some intriguing results that should be of interest to all institutional researchers. Based on this study, it appears that faculty have strong opinions about information, decision-making, and the activities of institutional research, as well as definite attitudes towards institutional researchers.

Information

Faculty participating in this study indicated that collecting information about themselves and what they do is important. Such information, they believe, aids in making personnel decisions, in answering questions posed by others such as trustees, college administrators and state and federal governments, and in knowing how institutional resources are allocated. However, they state clearly that such data should represent accurately and specifically the activities

of the institution, should be subject to scrupulous inquiry, and should be continually updated to reflect current situations. Further, they believe that it is important for the terminology and definitions used by institutional research to reflect the functions of higher education rather than the business/industrial enterprise. However, a small but vocal minority altogether opposes quantification. They argue that most of the data collected is poor, its gathering irrational and its analysis faulty--and therefore that it is inappropriate to higher educational institutions.

The faculty interviewed believe that the integrity of the institution and the privacy of the individual must be maintained, and therefore that data on individuals must be kept confidential. The faculty further argue that once data is collected many people will know about it. The data must be released if requested, since it is sheer folly to deny its existence. Therefore, the faculty made the following suggestions: that no data be collected or disseminated that would undermine the integrity of the institution; that guidelines be constructed so that a breach of faith can not occur; and that all proposals for the collection of data be subject to review by the faculty.

According to the faculty in this study the major risk of information collection is the question of who will use the information and for what purposes. Some state university faculty accept the risks associated with data collection as one of the annoyances one puts up with in a state university system. These faculty represent the school of political survival that attests to the principle of CMT (cover my tail) and OCS (only the crafty survive). Further, they appear to feel that the administration is inept in analyzing the information collected and thus they believe faculty should control via committee the information-gathering process. Others direct their anger and fear at an administration that they perceive as creating unrest, anxiety, and dishonesty by pretending collegiality yet hypocritically dictating academic policy.

The private college faculty express anger, fear or indifference. In some cases they believe data collection is a farce. The faculty question the methodology, the meaning of the numbers, and the analysis. They look askance at the latest questionnaire or survey and proceed to place it with all similar administrative documents--in the circular file. In other cases, the faculty consider data collection a dangerous tool because it gives administration an unfair amount of leverage in the struggle between administration and faculty. Such faculty believe that certain data collection procedures are used to block the results of other methods of inquiry in order to present a particular point of view. As a result, they perceive that selected data is used by administration in defense against the faculty and for justifying administrative actions.

Decision-Making

Although the faculty responding in this study believe information should improve decision-making and promote academic planning, respondents from all four institutions said they seriously doubt that any amount of data, poor or excellent, will contribute to decision-making or academic planning at their institutions.

The most common comment in response to the question regarding rational decision-making was, "Rational? In relation to what?" The faculty appear to regard their respective administrations as devious, unskilled in the use of data for decision-making, and reluctant to acquire those skills.

Faculty believe that data generates alternative solutions to problems but that the administration fails to pursue these alternatives. They also feel that the administration refuses to take the steps necessary to improve academic quality. In contrast, administrators believe that they develop alternative solutions and consider all aspects of planning before coming to a decision. Administrators perceive themselves as using the data for evaluating the outcome of their decisions and indicating "whether the solutions are working or not."

According to the faculty interviewed, various methods of decision-making are used throughout the four institutions. These include: (1) the method of tenacity, (2) the buddy system, (3) SOP (seat of pants), and (4) the generations.

The method of tenacity is typified by the statement, "It's always been done this way, so why change?" The buddy system states, "We'll ask Sye. He's a good friend of the dean, who is a good friend of the president, who should know what's going on." The SOP says, "It feels good; if it flies let's see who shoots it down." And the generations proceeds with, "How can Sally know anything when she's so young and a girl at that?" Needless to say all of these methods interact--creating an overwhelming atmosphere of incredibility in academia.

The role of institutional research in decision-making is almost overlooked in the fray between administration and faculty. The faculty feels it is or would be nice to have an IR person supplying numbers. But such services are regarded as frivolities--like butter in time of war.

Faculty appear to believe that the struggle between themselves and the administration is genuine and bitter. They complain that "the generations" are in power and resist change. Older staff and faculty members in positions of influence make decisions by the SOP method and then collect data to support their decisions. Some faculty liken the relationship to an emotionally weak family--with the administration an overbearing, dominant parent who gives the child (the faculty) the illusion of voice. Some faculty in the state university system liken the relationship to dogs scrapping over a bone--implying that there is some ultimate

benefit for the winner; others liken it to cats fighting on a backyard fence--implying territorial prerogative; and still others liken the relationship between faculty and administration to Alice and the Red Queen--implying irrational abuse of power in an illogical wonderland.

Faculty at the private colleges agree with their public colleagues and add yet another perspective. At one of the colleges faculty suggested that data is used in administrative functions only when it does not interfere with the cause of tradition. Faculty from another college intimated that internal politics obfuscate any rational planning process and that planning and decisions are made prior to data collection. In addition, these faculty believe that whoever has the power--and they are not sure who that is--makes decisions with or without regard to data and the systemic nature of the institution. Therefore, they are not surprised that the administration never talks with the faculty and only "seeps information" to them.

Attitude and Attitude Change

For the most part, faculty interviewed at both the state university and the private liberal arts colleges express a negative view of the institutional research function if not toward the institutional researcher. They feel that IR should be first and foremost a service function for the faculty. They perceive IR now operating not as a service, but as an Orwellian big brother, a tool of the administration that depersonalizes them, churns them in and out of computers and--the ultimate affront--represents them as numbers and symbols on computer displays. Because of this perception, often reinforced by abbreviations, truncations, and mystical codes, the faculty fear that IR will generate information that diminishes the faculty role in educational decision-making and provides the impetus or rationale for administration to proliferate itself. As a result of this anxiety, faculty believe that institutional research should be closely monitored by them and their deans in order to ensure that proper limits are established and maintained over what data is collected.

In contrast, academic administrators see institutional research as "horning in on decision-making." They fear institutional research will generate information implying certain decisions which might diminish their rights, responsibilities and power. Instead of seeking as faculties do, to control and monitor IR, academic administrators would prefer that IR quietly disappear into the registrar's office, or produce such an abundance of useless data that it will be ignored.

The main activity of IR is to provide data and information. Faculty perceive this as a worthy activity, but find the output lacking in both availability and comprehensibility. Computer printouts are perceived as unreadable to all but those initiated in data use and data management. Faculty

would prefer that the data be arrayed as information in tables that are clearly labeled and explained in text. They would also appreciate commentary that places numbers in a perspective relative to the history of the institution. Faculty want to receive information from IR, but only a little at a time. Many feel they are flooded with data and are given little time to respond to it. It seems as if some faculty would like to pore over it, digest it, argue about the nature of the questions, and debate the interpretation of the results.

In the three institutions that have an official institutional researcher, the director of IR was found lacking. It appears that faculty will only accept those persons who have come up through the ranks, have familiarity with the institution, go out and meet and talk with them, see the problems first-hand and understand the faculty's situation. In most instances, the point was made that the numbers were not the problem; the problem was the person who develops and interprets the data. He was either too overburdened to talk with faculty, too humorless, or simply not the right person for the job. If IR must exist, the responses indicate the right person would be a faculty member who could work with the faculty to provide information to help them make intelligent choices.

At only one institution were faculty reluctantly appreciative of the institutional research office. This institution appointed a professor to direct the office. His qualities of helpfulness, trustworthiness, respect, and willingness to be of service resulted in high regard by the faculty before he became director. However, even in this instance the faculty still questioned the need for such a function. In the private institution that did not have an official IR function, the remark was made time and again that it would be nice to have such a person but that additional faculty are needed more.

Directions for Institutional Research

Faculty believe that institutional research should be engaged in a service effort with two major concerns: data collection and relationships with faculty. Data should be collected in context; i.e., an appropriate unit of measurement should be defined specifically for the individual department being considered so that the resultant data would reflect academic reality. For example, faculty believe that a system needs to be devised that credits them for interdisciplinary efforts, is accurate, and is responsive to their demands for information. Another major point is timeliness. For example, being four weeks late in delivering information is apparently tantamount to destroying credibility. Deans feel they can obtain information faster by asking faculty directly, and faculty feel they can better gather information by asking students directly. However, faculty believe that if a good data base were developed and

maintained, perhaps better information would be available. Moreover, IR would have the information it needed and hopefully would no longer need to bother faculty.

The characteristic that most appropriately defines the desired relationship between IR and faculty is willingness to serve. Faculty believe IR should be a faculty resource. As such, IR should be responsive to faculty in ways that aid them in their work of education and research. In the public state university, both administration and faculty suggest that perhaps there should be "a little IR in each school."

As servant to the faculty, IR should act ethically. It should be aware of the impact its data can have and the effect of data manipulations on other people. Also, it should be reliable and supportive, and help faculty "to know what it is doing is right." In addition, IR should expose its value structure so faculty can properly interpret any bias in reports, i.e. judge the data from its source. Finally, IR should remember it is in "the business of making and selling information." In short, the faculty believe that IR must assess the needs and respond accordingly, exercise better control over the quality and quantity of data, and sensitively present the results to a faculty audience.

Summary Comments and Discussion

This study has investigated faculty perceptions of the IR function in a public state university and three private liberal-arts colleges. Even though the limited nature of the sample precludes generalizations, some summary comments are in order.

Faculty in this study find themselves in the grip of a free-floating anxiety that disrupts their professional lives, their relationships with administration, and their interaction with IR. It appears that the cause of this anxiety is a conflict between the faculty goal of professional development and the current realities of economic life in America. Many faculty are concerned that the essence of the academic experience is deteriorating. They suspect that this deterioration is aided by IR which attempts to measure all aspects of academic life and supplies public officials and academic administrators with the results of these measurements. Public officials use the data to berate the faculty. Administrators use the data to justify decisions, ignoring faculty concerns. To these faculty, the activities of IR are tantamount to heresy. "It is the educators who create and shape academic reality," they argue, "not the men and women who crunch the data and administer the institution."

To place these findings in proper perspective, it must be recognized that these faculty perceptions are not unique, in that they reflect two current components of common faculty concern: the exercise of academic freedom and the adjustment to problems of declining academic growth. The

exercise of academic freedom has been a traditional and sacred academic right, hard won by Academe.

The second, but related, component of faculty concern is adjustment to decline in academic growth. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1975) suggests some areas of conflict aggravated by this decline: tenure practices and their applications; allocation and reallocation of resource; and the authority struggle between administration and faculty. Further, the foundation predicts that the atmosphere of suspicion and conflict will expand rather than abate. Thus, the faculty's fear of being silenced is not unwarranted. As Hirschman (1970) notes, without a voice the faculty ceases to exist as a faculty. The authority struggle between administration and faculty is therefore perceived by some faculty as a struggle "to the death." The battle over control of the academic enterprise is a matter of faculty survival fought by the administration through incremental intrusion on the professional lives of faculty. It is a battle that many believe will continue until the faculty voice is silenced. In the words of one dean, administrators are "faculty who have gone wrong." Faculty see administrators as persons thirsting for power. Administration, from the faculty's perception, does little to assure them that their death fears are groundless. Instead, administration continues to concentrate power, to reallocate resources, and to reward appropriate behavior.

Where is institutional research in all of this? According to the findings of this study, IR is caught in the no man's land between the faculty and administrative trenches. As a result, it is the recipient of anger that perhaps would be more appropriately directed against the forces that threaten to restructure academic life, or at least against an administration that faculty view as an adversary. IR is susceptible to that anger partly because it is in the vulnerable position of forward observer for the administrative platoon.

Neither the function of IR nor its staff is sacrosanct. In their desire to control the perceived function of IR, faculty loudly demand that both the director and the output be subject to critical review. The director must be an academic, must be service-oriented, and must be acceptable to them. The data must be "clean," i.e., measure up to certain scholarly standards, and yet faculty require control lest the data undermine their struggle with the administration.

Yet as one listens to the faculty who participated in this study, it seems clear that regardless of the director's acceptability or the data's cleanliness, faculty and academic line administrators will oppose or resist the IR effort. The reasons are two: (1) control abates anxiety only temporarily, since control ultimately begets further control that begets compulsion and anxiety; (2) faculty are aware that as institutional data becomes exact, more and more of their professional lives are exposed. Faculty prefer obscurity which, as Trow (1975) suggests, is ". . . the absence of

data that allow these academic and institutional variations to be seen and dealt with - allows the survival of functional as well as dysfunctional diversity. . . obscurity allows for the many things, good and ill, which academic men cannot justify." It is this obscurity that challenges the institutional researcher, causes him/her to probe for clarity, and brings IR into conflict with the faculty and academic administration.

Since it appears that IR is between the proverbial rock and a hard place, how does the IR person cope successfully with such a hostile environment and produce in spite of it? Although professionally independent people in their own right, institutional researchers can seek various means of providing greater service to the faculty. For example, they can supply information to faculty upon request and become more visible and available for consultation in departmental problems requiring educational research; they can use faculty advisory committees, particularly for sensitive issues; and they can involve dissident faculty in IR activities. Asking for help from faculty who are knowledgeable in data collection or systems planning would also be appreciated. Most important, IR reports should be carefully written so that faculty who are not quantitatively oriented can understand the analyses.

Of course to be effective IR must have protection and support from top administration. It is apparent from the results of this study and from other studies in the literature that institutional management needs the information services of IR. Thus, top administration must recognize the anxiety created by information and protect IR from the assaults of faculty. Without such protection, IR can easily become a whipping boy for the faculty and administration alike, and thereby be rendered ineffective or even be abolished.

IR cannot solve the ills of the institution nor correct the shortcomings of its management. Institutional research typically consists of one or two people alone on the firing line with minimal support. They should not be expected to carry the burden of administrative ills, nor should they be exposed to unwarranted abuse which is often personalized. It must be recognized that when they act in their roles (i.e., as researcher, analyst, administrative officer) and not as persons (i.e., Mary Dwight or Thomas Painter) they immediately become suspect, since faculty tend to deal with persons, not with roles.

Institutional researchers can help to effect an amicable relationship with faculty by seeking their services while remaining under the protection of top administration. Through a more personalized working relationship with IR staff, faculty might begin to perceive the institutional research function as an operation consisting of persons who care about them, their institution, and the education of their students.

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ACADEMICIANS AND ANALYSTS: ALLIES OR ANTAGONISTS?

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Is there conflict between the institutional researcher and the faculty? Is the institutional researcher a jackal in the academic jungle? Are academicians and analysts to be considered allies or antagonists? Even without the benefit of real data, it is probably correct to suggest that the answers to these questions are yes and no, sometimes and in some places, allies here and antagonists there--or, in other words, it depends. It is almost certainly a matter of degree, time and place.

Handy as the concept may be, there is no such thing as the institutional researcher. Our backgrounds, personalities, responsibilities and locations within institutions are diverse, and each of these variables helps to determine how we may be perceived by the faculty.

Similarly, the designations "faculty" and "faculty member" are abstractions. It is a reasonable hypothesis that every institutional researcher will be viewed as an ally by some members of his or her faculty, as an antagonist by others, as insufficiently important to care about by still others, while unknown to all the rest.

Thus, the question of conflict cannot be answered without equivocation. What can be considered are the potential sources of conflict or antagonism between the faculty and the institutional researcher, the academician and the analyst, and the strategies for reducing the resulting conflict or antagonism.

One potential source of conflict is that the analyst and the academician view the institution from different perspectives. The faculty member views the institution as a base for his professional enterprise, teaching and scholarship. He or she may even view it as existing primarily for these purposes. In contrast, the institutional researcher sees the institution as belonging to and a servant of society. Data and analyses which derive from the latter perspectives may not address the problems or suggest the solutions seen from the former. The faculty member may well ask, "How many student credit hours are produced by the public relations office, the accounting office, or the office of institutional research?"

It is useful to contrast the perspectives of the analyst and the faculty member being analyzed. The faculty member knows what he or she is doing, how many intense hours he or she spends doing it, and that it is educationally and socially important. What else does anyone else need to know? Even if some institutional purpose may be served by broader knowledge, no quantitative analysis is capable of fully describing the professional life and contributions of the academician and his or her faculty colleagues. Further, numbers generated by the analyst for use by others create uncertainty, not only about the adequacy of the numbers but also about their use.

Consider the unit-cost study, however carried out. There will be one department--call it Department H--which

has the highest unit cost in the institution; Department L which has the lowest, Department A which is above average, and Department B which is below. What are the reactions of the faculty or the chairpersons of these four departments when they see these products of institutional research? What does the unit-cost figure imply? What action affecting the department might it bring? To Department H or A, it may verify high quality and justify continued high support, or it may be read as a threat that resources will be withdrawn. To Department L or B, the unit cost figure may be viewed as proof of efficiency, as evidence of budgetary starvation and as justification for increased resources, or as an explanation of their ineffectiveness. Many such interpretations involve an element of threat. The uncertainty of varying possible interpretations compound the threat. Here is potential for misunderstanding which leads to antagonism.

Faculty antagonism may be incomprehensible to the analyst who knows and writes at length about the assumptions and limitations of his data, who knows and clearly states what these assumptions demonstrate, who expects only the best academic judgment to govern any use made of the data, and, incidentally, who knows that Department H is a problem. Might the analyst be antagonistic to critics of his work?

A second potential source of conflict derives from the analyst's dual commitment to "efficiency" and "effectiveness." If academicians understand anything about institutional research, they know that the analyst labors to reveal how productivity can be increased. They also know that the only way productivity in academic programs can be increased is by changing what they, the faculty members, do. The academician believes that productivity is an unquantifiable given, yet he knows the analyst is producing indices of productivity to be used by administrators who are paid to make policy decisions and resource allocations which can only affect his or her circumstances. As analysts, do we really believe that our SCH per FTE data reveals all that should be known? What remains which cannot be easily quantified?

Faculty members may also be persuaded that efficiency and effectiveness are attributes that may only be traded one for the other. They may recognize that efficiency can be measured, if only in an approximate manner, but they likewise know that quality is largely intangible. In their view whatever impact institutional research can have on productivity must be at the sacrifice of quality. The analyst knows the importance of both efficiency and effectiveness and that they must not be considered independently. He or she believes they may be increased at the same time or, at least, that one may be changed without affecting the other. Yet where in the computer printouts and data is our understanding of the interaction of efficiency and effectiveness clearly revealed? Is it surprising that we as a profession are suspect when all the numbers we use are about productivity and we can only admonish those who use them not

to forget about the importance of quality?

What becomes of the conflict when the analyst turns his attention to the ingredients of quality? First of all, there is no consensus on the components of quality or their susceptibility to analysis. Surely indications of the quality of the instructional program are found in the curriculum, but how or where? Course proliferation must be harmful to quality (as well as, incidentally, to efficiency), so the analyst can count the courses and annual increments in numbers thereof. Overspecialization must be antithetical to quality, so the analyst can locate departments in which majors earn excessive numbers of credits in the major department. Attrition can't be good, so we count the drop-outs.

But wait a minute. Who is responsible for the curriculum? If there is any responsibility the faculty cherishes, it is the curriculum. A president, academic vice president, or even academic dean who is sufficiently daring to suggest that something may be wrong with the curriculum must feel unusually secure in his position. The analyst who allows himself to be drawn into analyses of the curriculum may lack wisdom.

A third potential source of conflict can be described as the principle that "unfamiliarity breeds contempt." Perhaps unfamiliarity is at the root of the two potential sources of conflict already discussed, but it bears special mention anyway. How well do we analysts know our faculty colleagues, their work, their goals, their motivations and their concerns? How sympathetic are we to them? Do we sufficiently understand that it is the faculty who deliver the institutional product and that if our work has impact, it is principally impact on faculty? Do we ever, in weak moments, think of the faculty as "they" who don't understand or whose interests are inimical to the best interests of the college or university? Do we view the faculty as our antagonists?

How well does the faculty understand the responsibilities of the institutional researcher and the nature of the contributions he or she is trying to make? Isn't it true that what is not understood tends to be distrusted or feared and that distrust and fear are seeds of conflict? We know, understand and respect our allies. Is not antagonism a natural consequence of unfamiliarity?

Finally, institutional researchers are administrators or, to soften it a little, staff to administrators. We have to report to someone. That is the nature of organization. Has anyone ever heard of any organizational unit reporting to the faculty? By definition, whoever a unit reports to is an administrator and the reportee (outside of the school or college academic organization) is in the administrative organization. Consequently, the analyst is subject to being caught--and not necessarily in the middle--of any faculty and administration conflict or antagonism that may exist.

It has been argued that institutional researchers should be part of the academic organization and should

report to the chief academic officer rather than elsewhere. This is fine, but the chief academic officer is still an administrator and usually a member of the administrative "team."

Now, if the analyst on the campus ever appears to be working towards ends different from those of the faculty, what about the analyst in the central offices of a multi-campus system? What about the "institutional researcher" on the staff of the state board? It is certainly easy to hypothesize that differences in perspectives between academician and analyst are proportional to the distance between them, that the focus on efficiency increases with distance from the classroom or laboratory, that unfamiliarity increases with remoteness, and that the analyst on the campus may be an ally of the faculty, but the one in the central offices is probably not, and the one in state government is clearly in the enemy camp.

If the arguments and generalizations suggested above are persuasive, one is tempted to conclude that conflict between the faculty and institutional research is inherent, that the academician and the analyst are natural antagonists.

But, like the nature-nurture question (how important is it to know that IQ is X percent nature and Y percent nurture when only the nurture component can be manipulated?), maybe it is of little importance to know whether or not academician-analyst conflict is endemic. What is important to know is how the conflict or antagonism can be reduced or kept under control. Some degree of conflict or antagonism may be desirable in order to keep people thinking. Paul Dressel in describing institutional research, commented, "Irritating in some ways it must be or it is unlikely to attract attention or get action; however some measure of restraint must be exercised else the whole endeavor will be rejected."[1]

The following suggestions for reducing or controlling antagonism, most or all of which have been in our literature for some time, are offered:

1. Do something for the faculty. Find out what is bothering them (this year). Study it with counsel from them. Give them the report. But keep your boss informed, at least, along the way.

2. Discover something good about the institution or the faculty. Disseminate it. Analysts can be good guys, too. Our responsibility to contribute to improvement forces us to identify things that need improvement and that is as it should be, but if we stumble across something that does not need improvement, call attention to it. Let the public relations officer handle it, maybe, but get a little credit for it.

3. Open the communication channels. The college or university may already have more newsletters than is desirable or will be read, but offices of institutional research have issued newsletters. Perhaps a regular or occasional item in an existing instrument of internal communication would help the faculty know what we do. Similarly, a faculty advisory committee might be useful in establishing two-way communication with the faculty.

4. Be responsive. If a faculty member or department chairperson would happen to call or drop in with a question, don't say, "I don't know" or "That's not my responsibility." At least say, "I'll be glad to find out," and then do it.

5. Study the administration sometimes, (if you think you can get away with it). Don't spend all your time trying to identify the departments that can get along with fewer faculty. There may be some administrative units that could get by with fewer staff.

6. Ask the faculty for help. You don't know everything. Ask a faculty member to consult with you. Try to work out an arrangement whereby a faculty member or two can take responsibility for an institutional study in an area in which they have competence and interest.

7. Avoid "confidential" reports (as much as possible). Before using the "confidential" rubber stamp ask yourself and your boss, as appropriate, why the stamp should be used. Why not put a copy of each IR report in the library?

8. Teach, and do publishable research. You can't count on picking up the faculty perspective by spending three hours a week in the classroom, but it's fun and doesn't hurt your image.

9. Above all, use exemplary methodology. Demonstrate that institutional research meets the standards of faculty research. The report to the president may need to be to the point, but the version in the library should be complete enough to receive a faculty review and solid enough to pass it.

10. Don't make decisions that should be made and defended by others. You are paid for objectivity and not for cause championing or academic-political judgments. Render opinions if sought and you are knowledgeable enough to do so, but don't render them under the analyst's hat.

These ten suggestions illustrate that there are ways in which the academician and the analyst can be helped to understand that in the most fundamental sense each is an ally of the other. Each member of the family of the academy--academician, analyst, and administrator (not to forget the students and alumni)--shares the basic desire to be part of the best college or university and educational program possible. It is essential that we understand this truth so the differences in principles and priorities that often divide us will not tear us asunder and can be reasonably explored to improve the harmony and effectiveness of the academic community.

NOTES

[1]Dressel, Paul and associates. Institutional Research in the University. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1971, p. 52.

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Center for Educational Management Studies

The Center for Educational Management Studies (CEMS) at the University of Hawaii was founded on the belief that colleges and universities will increasingly need individuals trained in the techniques of management and planning in higher education. The Center has been established to integrate management related fields with education in order to prepare students for future careers in the management of higher education.

The mission of the Center for Educational Management Studies (CEMS) is to facilitate the development and implementation of innovative and effective management styles at institutions of higher education. This mission is addressed by a variety of CEMS activities including a program to support graduate training, an institutional service program, and a research program.

Established originally at the University of Massachusetts in 1975 under a grant from the Exxon Education Foundation, CEMS was relocated to the University of Hawaii in January, 1978. CEMS is intended to provide a coordinative support program which compliments existing graduate programs in diverse management related disciplines such as accounting, psychology, operations research, sociology, economics, management, education, finance, etc. In conjunction with formal classes and seminars, students are provided an opportunity to engage in applied research on various issues related to contemporary college and university management. Financial support is available for thesis research activities related to higher education. Additionally, CEMS provides students with internship experience in planning, budgeting, analytic studies, systems analysis, and other areas related to institutional management.

The research program of CEMS provides support for the development and dissemination of research outcomes that address analytical problems of college and university management. Housed within the central administration of the University of Hawaii, CEMS also provides a bridge between the academic and administrative functions of the institution. This permits utilizing the academic expertise of the institution in addressing higher education management problems. In addition, visiting scholars from other institutions provide further breadth and scope to CEMS research and evaluation capabilities.

Other CEMS activities include an internship program and occasional seminars and training workshops designed to provide faculty and administrators with an introduction to various forms of new analytic techniques and to aid them in utilizing management principles in their current and future positions.

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